



The Stilt

Vol. 20 No. 2

November 2001

The Newsletter of the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory

In this issue:

- 1 *A Re-Tern on Investments*
Waterbird Program Expands To Study Contaminants
- 2 *Urban Banding*
On the Frontier of Preserving Urban Habitat
- 3 *The California Fall Challenge*
First of Two Reports on Birding and Fundraising
- 4 *Biologists Attend Summer Conferences*
- 5 *Sparrows and Strategic Planning*
- 8 *Education Program at Coyote Creek Field Station*

A RE-TERN ON INVESTMENTS

SFBBO's "Birds of Baylands" Program Recipient of Bay Fund Award

We are pleased to announce the San Francisco Foundation has recognized the need to continue our 20 years of waterbird monitoring on south San Francisco Bay. In March 2001, the Foundation's Bay Fund awarded SFBBO a grant of \$35,000 for our Birds of the Bayland Program. This generous grant will fund our 2001 Colonial Waterbird Program, a program that has been supported over the years by the Observatory's Membership. This will enable our biologists to continue our monitoring of Forster's and Caspian terns in 2001, and to expand our existing program to include an examination of contaminants in their eggs. We are gratified to have the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Contaminants Division as partners in this investigation. Their expertise in contaminants and lab analysis of samples is critical to the success of this project.

According to Anne Fitzgerald, Chair of the grant review committee, a primary reason the San Francisco Foundation chose to fund this program was the evident commitment of our Board, volunteers and members, who have supported SFBBO's waterbird work for the first 20 years. Thank You!

Biologists and volunteers at SFBBO have annually surveyed most of the 10-20 breeding colonies of terns in the south bay. We found that, compared to the beginning of the 1990s, breeding populations of Forster's Terns in the south Bay may have experienced a population decline of over 40 % (Ryan in Goals Project 2000). We hope that with the help of the San Francisco Foundation, we will be able to continue to monitor this species, and identify the causes of its decline.

Research on contaminants in the Bay is not new. An earlier study co-authored by

SFBBO found significant contaminants (organochlorines and mercury) in heron, egret and tern eggs collected at Bair Island in San Mateo County. The investigators discovered elevated levels of DDE and PCBs in these samples. Recent studies undertaken to address water quality issues have focused mainly on fish. Our new study targets contaminant loads near the top of the Bay's food chain, specifically heavy metals such as mercury, selenium, nickel and cadmium.



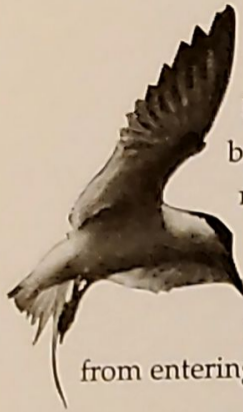
PHOTO BY SUE MACIAS

At work in a Forster's Tern colony.



San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory
P.O. Box 247 1290 Hope Street Alviso, CA 95002

Continued on page 2

BAY FUND AWARD*Continued from page 1*

These contaminants probably were deposited in the bay years ago, as a result of mining and other industries. Current water quality regulation works to prevent additional metals from entering the system.

Terns are known to forage in all types of south bay habitats. They can be seen routinely diving into sloughs, open bay, diked marshes and salt ponds. We will also collect fish from several different habitats to analyze for the same contaminants. We may be able to discern a pattern of contamination, using radioisotope analysis, and to compare these "signatures" of contamination to those found in tern eggs. If we do find significant levels of toxins, the comparisons may help pinpoint the sources and help eliminate pathways of further contamination.

Dredging, fill and even restoration projects may lead to higher levels of contaminants circulating in the Bay's waters. The Bay is already known to carry a variety of contaminants at potentially harmful levels to humans and wildlife. The proposed airport runway expansion project and its mitigation may greatly alter the hydrology of San Francisco Bay. This project and others will require extensive dredging, stirring up sediments and potentially resuspending contaminants in the water column. Without information on how wildlife may be affected, it is difficult for environmental advocates, land managers and commercial interests to make informed decisions about future proposals.

—Janet Hanson
Executive Director

THANK YOU!

SFBBO acknowledges the generous support of the San Francisco Foundation.

Urban Banding

Many of you were intrigued by the news in the last newsletter that we are now banding at five additional sites outside of the Coyote Creek Field Station. Banding at these sites is a very different experience. Biologist Gina Barton has provided us with a peek at what is proving to be the frontier of environmental research, assessing urban wildlife habitats.

As I step out of my townhouse into the pre-dawn darkness, I prepare myself for another day of banding in an urban setting. This has been almost a daily event for us at SFBBO this year. We have been banding at CCFS (Coyote Creek Field Station) for 15 years now and been part of an extensive revegetation project. As a result SFBBO has had a unique opportunity to continue assessing bird populations and vegetation at additional sites along Coyote Creek and Guadalupe River (our Streamside Songbirds Project). At first glance, you would probably only see a barren, treeless area alongside a treed area, littered with trash that has accumulated after floods. You may also hear the roaring of airplanes taking off from nearby San Jose Airport. If you arrive early enough, you may also catch a glimpse of a Barn Owl flying overhead, a homeless camper, some stray cats and dogs, a few rabbits, and plenty of walkers and joggers passing by on the levee with the backdrop of either apartments or company buildings looming overhead. These areas are in fact riparian sites nestled among the high tech community of San Jose. As one volunteer said when he came to visit, "I can't believe that this area is only a few miles from where I work!"

Little did we know that these areas, which haven't undergone an extensive

revegetation makeover, as has occurred at CCFS, would have an abundance of breeding, migrant and wintering birds. Among the breeding birds we band at these sites are: Bullock's and Hooded



Volunteer Amit Patel and Biologist Gina Barton collect data on vegetation characteristics so that land managers can learn which habitats are best for bird populations.



Gina is delighted with the Red-shouldered Hawk caught at one of the urban banding sites near McCarthy and Zanker.

Orioles, Song Sparrows, Common Yellowthroats, Red-shouldered Hawks, Bewick's Wrens, Bushtits, Chesnut-backed Chickadees, Nuttall's and Downy Woodpeckers, Black Phoebes and California Towhees. The migrants include, Yellow, Orange-crowned and Wilson's Warblers, Winter Wrens, the aberrant Summer Tanager, Willow and Western Flycatchers, Savannah Sparrows and Lincoln Sparrows. Wintering residents are: White-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrows.

One of the unique things that we at SFBBO are challenged with is determining how these areas can be preserved or better maintained for the continued survival of these bird species that reside, migrate, and winter here.

—Gina Barton
Biologist

The California Fall Challenge is on!



This year's California Fall Challenge began with a bang.

The Kickoff meeting was held on August 2nd, in the Cannery Building in Alviso. The turnout included new and familiar faces. The Kickoff alone raised \$1100 for the Observatory. Jan Hintermeister hosted the evening, which began with a brief "pishing" lesson from last year's champion, Mike Mammoser. Janet Hanson, executive director of the Observatory, spoke about the programs at the Bird Observatory that are only funded by individual donors, including the 5 regional land management committees on which she serves as an "expert advocate" for the environment, thanks to the many studies the Bird Observatory has completed over the years. Lowell Saumweber gave us an overview of the Fall Challenge and Lou Young gave us a brief review of the rules.

The highlight of the evening was a presentation from Karen DeMello on "How to ask everyone you know for money."

Karen convinced us that raising money for the Bird Observatory might be easier and more fun than we thought. Karen's advice is included in the CFC handbook this year.

There will be stiff competition for the fundraising prize. Best of all, Jan Hintermeister told us about some of the prizes that have been donated to the Fall Challenge. Frances Toldi had the entire crowd entranced by his description of the Alaska Cruise that he won last year.

Captain Dean Baird has again donated a one week cruise for two in Price William Sound, Alaska, aboard Discovery Voyages.

As of this writing there are 20 teams registered to bird in 17 counties. Three teams have already done their days and sent in their reports. Ed Pandolfino's Colusa team may well win the Leica Spotting Scope with .6468, 152 species of 235 possible.

Here are two highlights reports from some early days –

"On September 21, Brian Williams, Dennis Cavallo and I did a Big Day in

Colusa County for the California Fall Challenge, San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory's annual fundraising event.

We had a most outstanding day winding up with 152 species in this surprising county. Though finding no super rarities, we had very few misses. Best birds were Clark's Nutcrackers (one group of 3 and another of 9—maybe the second or third county records!) and a very late Olive-sided Flycatcher, both in the Goat Mountain area; a Pectoral Sandpiper was at East Park Reservoir; Lesser Yellowlegs and several Great-tailed Grackles at Maxwell Sewage Ponds. We had excellent results in the mountains/foothills for fall, finding nearly all expected warblers and all the expected owls there (even getting good looks at Barn, Western Screech, Great Horned and Northern Pygmy).

First bird of the day was a Western Screech-owl at East Park Reservoir just after midnight and the last bird was Virginia Rail at Colusa NWR at about 9:30PM.

The "Permanent Pucker" award goes to Brian Williams who repeated his excellent Common Poorwill imitation over 350 times in the pre-dawn and post-sunset hours before FINALLY getting a response."

—Ed Pandolfino

We had a splendid day and some excellent birds.

Our route began up Tar Canyon in the western part of the county, included lots of agricultural ponds on the southern and eastern part of the county, the Jackson Avenue ponds, Kings Row, Burris Park, and Boggs Slough. (These sites and more are further described at:

<http://fog.ccsf.org/~jmorlan/kingbirding.htm>

Highlights included:

— A Brewer's Sparrow at the South Wilbur Flood Area

— 4 species of owl, plus Common Poorwill

— 8 species of warbler (6 species in one tree in one minute, certainly an unprecedented "fallout" in Kings County!)

— A Lewis' Woodpecker that Jay saw while I was fiddling with papers in the car and which flew out of sight before I could get on it fully, to my continuing annoyance

— Five species of Woodpecker including Hairy, tough for the county

Big misses include Kingfisher, Western Kingbird (where have they all gone?), Cinnamon Teal (exceptionally dry year), and no tanagers or grosbeaks. Also, we missed all the goodies that county listers and others had the previous week — no phainopepla, Mac warbler, Lawrences' Goldfinch or interesting shorebirds.

Our total of 121 is a significant improvement over the previous record(ours of last year) of 111, and with a little luck and a little more water I think we could have hit 130. Not too shabby for this god-forsaken little patch of desolate ag land in the southern valley. This is the 5th consecutive year that Rural Rex has ridden Kings County, and it gets better every year — come on down sometime!

—Luke

Luke Cole, San Francisco

Online Donations

Thanks to the efforts of our Webmaster, George Oetzel, you can now donate online with a credit card, safely and securely. Donations via the website are fully tax-deductible. To request additional documentation of your tax-deductible donation, please direct an email to admin@sfbbo.org.

Biologists Attend Summer Conferences

This summer staff members attended two conferences: the California Partners in Flight (CalPIF) meeting in Mono Lake, and the American Ornithological Union (AOU) Conference in Seattle in August. Gina Barton, SFBBO Biologist, and myself (Sherry) attended. Besides having fun traveling to distant and beautiful places, we learned a lot and were inspired by the people we met and the talks we attended.

The California Partners In Flight (PIF) meeting took place at the Lee Vining Forest Service Visitor Center, with a great view of Mono Lake and the surrounding Sierra mountain range. Partners in Flight is a grassroots organization whose central objective is to help form partnerships among government agencies, private individuals and organizations, professional groups, the academic community, and industry, to achieve success in conserving bird populations in this hemisphere. The meeting we attended started with an overview of bird conservation issues in the eastern Sierra region. We heard talks from various federal, state, and private organizations conducting bird research and conservation projects,

and regarding important conservation issues in the region. The participation of the various organizations and agencies was impressive. It was also a powerful meeting in that it motivated us at SFBBO to examine the California PIF conservation plans and see how we can contribute to the conservation efforts in our area.

We also attended the American Ornithological Union (AOU) conference in Seattle with the objective of taking part in two important workshops. The first workshop taught us how to use the computer program 'Band Manager' - so that we can actually send our bird banding data to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, who manages the national bird banding database and issues the bands. After all, we have over 3 years of backlogged data to send in, so we want to do it right!

Our second AOU workshop was entitled "Migration Monitoring in the Americas". It gave us a chance to discuss methods of standardizing data collection and issues of sharing information about data collected during migratory periods. This would allow us to get a better idea of the path

birds travel during migration, and answer basic questions of bird migration - what habitat is most important, what do they eat, how long do they stop at certain locations, etc. This workshop led to a smaller meeting among federal, state, and private organizations of the western United States. More specifically, we met with staff members from other bird observatories in California, Oregon, and Washington, as well as members of federal and state research organizations to discuss how we can coordinate migration monitoring at a more regional level (i.e. Western U.S. and Canada). It was exciting to meet with these organizations and talk about cooperative projects, and I hope we will be able to work together with them in the future.

In addition to the workshops, we spent three days attending scientific talks and social events, learning about subjects such as bird breeding biology and behavior, vocalizations, foraging, and avian winter ecology, just to name a few. My head was swimming with information and new research ideas at the end of each day!

Thanks to the members of SFBBO for providing the funds so that representatives of the Bird Observatory could attend these meetings. Janet and Sue will be presenting a poster at the State of the Estuary Conference in October on population trends of gulls and terns breeding on the San Francisco Bay. Gina and I hope to attend the North American Ornithological Conference next year, and present results from some of the birds studies we have going on here at the Bird Observatory!

- Sherry Hudson
Biologist



Sherry, Gina and Assistant Biologist Zena stopped at Crater Lake on their way to the American Ornithological Union Conference in Seattle.

WE'RE FAMOUS – WELL ALMOST.

A paper by SFBBO's Al Jaramillo and UC Berkeley's Brett Sandercock, titled "Annual Survival Rates of Wintering Sparrows: Assessing the Demographic Consequences of Migration," was accepted by the Auk for publication in January. Thanks to all of you who collected data for this by banding at the Field Station! This is the first SFBBO paper accepted by the Auk.

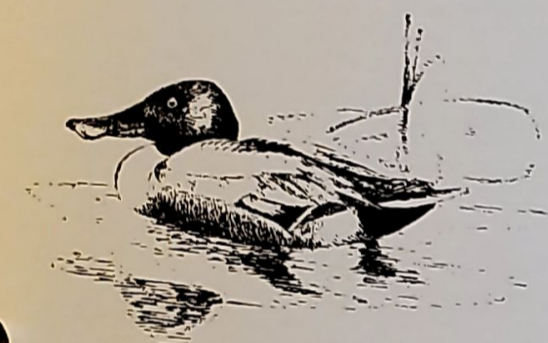


This Lincoln's Sparrow (left), pictured next to a Savannah's Sparrow, is among the wintering sparrows studied in Al and Brett's paper.

BOTULISM ALERT

We were hoping for a quiet autumn this year, for our Avian Disease Prevention Program. Unfortunately an outbreak of avian botulism has begun just as we go to press. So far, 200 dead ducks have been pulled from Coyote Creek and Coyote Creek Lagoon. Approximately 25 ducks have been taken to wildlife rehabilitators. Avian botulism is not transmittable to humans.

Unfortunately it can spread very quickly between birds, particularly if the carcasses are left in the water. Outbreaks are more likely to occur after sustained periods of warm weather. Outbreaks during fall migration are particularly worrisome because of the large numbers of birds that may be exposed to the toxin. Thank you to all of you who have rushed out to the sloughs on short notice with biologists Michelle Melby and Alyson Roskelley.



A wary Northern Shoveler wonders if Observatory staff and volunteers will be there to protect him from an epidemic of Avian Botulism

STRATEGIC PLANNING AT THE OBSERVATORY

The Bird Observatory has undergone enormous changes. To help us assess what we have done and to plan for the future, the Bird Observatory has sought the help of the Stanford Action Consulting Team, a group of Stanford Business School Alumni who volunteer their time and expertise to assist worthy organizations, like us! Andrea Corney, an experienced facilitator from Stanford ACT will lead our annual goals meeting in November. We hope to clarify our goals for the coming year and begin a longer term strategic planning process with ACT's help in the spring.

What is it like?

Erstwhile volunteer Chris Illes remembers the first time he went to a gull colony:

Wow, there are so many! The noise!

Despite the good training from Doug Bell before starting out on colonial bird walk-throughs, I was unprepared for just how chaotic it really was going to be. It is fun and exciting but hard to convey in words the amount of noise and excitement in the air as you walk through a colony with the parent birds screaming and diving all around you. While this distraction from above catches your attention, you best not let it wander. There is too much fragile life underfoot at the same time!

The gulls are by far the most aggressive, they are the only birds who have actually hit me in the head (hat or hardhat very useful). The terns always feel like they are going to hit you, especially the very loud Caspian terns. The Forster's terns are quieter only by comparison. But the terns always veer off. A gull, even when veering off may leave you covered in an unpleasant white residue.

Count the nests, count the eggs. Is that an Avocet egg or Tern? Gee, they look so alike when all covered with mud and sea foam. Watch where you step, duck your head. The end of the island is almost here!

Whew, another island counted. All the valuable information has been logged. Now back into the kayaks for a trip to the next island to see what discoveries await there.



Nesting California Gulls

We're Moving!

Built in 1906, the Alviso Cannery is more than the SFBBO office, it is the site of a fascinating part of Santa Clara Valley's History, (see box). The Cannery is currently owned by the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge. The Refuge has supported our research efforts by providing us with office space, rent-free for 20 years. Unfortunately, the building is deteriorating. Lacking the funds to maintain the building, the Refuge has put the Cannery on the Federal

Surplus List. While we look for a new home of our own, our office work will continue in a modular building behind the building. This is the same modular building that housed CCRS for many years. So we are moving 40 feet west and 11 feet straight down. By November 1st we expect to switch our phone service to the modular building with no interruption in service. Then the office, including our outstanding ornithological library will move to the modular building.

THE ASPARAGUS KING AND THE BAYSIDE CANNERY

Thomas Foon Chen, one-time owner of the Bayside Cannery was a social reformer and an inventor. Chen took over the cannery from his father in 1906 and expanded its operations by inventing a method of canning asparagus. In its heyday, the cannery ran on steam from a now capped artesian spring. Workers unloaded empty cans from steamboats at the side door, the steamboats then carried full cans up the bay to San Francisco. At one time, the Bayside Cannery was the third largest cannery in the country behind Delmonte and Libbey. Chen paid his workers a living wage, built houses for his workers in Alviso, (some of which still stand), and invented much of the machinery used in the Cannery, including a passenger van that could be converted into a produce truck. His pioneering efforts made him a wealthy man. When Chen died suddenly in 1931, the life insurance policy paid to his family was \$150,000, the highest life insurance payment in the United States that year. His funeral in San Francisco was attended by thousands. Due to his death and the depression, the cannery went out of business in 1936. The Cannery became home to a boat works and the workmanship of shipwrights is evident in the repairs that were made to the building in this period. This building that has survived floods and earthquakes now faces an uncertain future.



A county record? Database diva, Irene Beardsley holds an adult Catbird banded at Coyote Creek Field Station, September 26th.

NATTY BIRDERS!

You can look spiffy and support the Observatory by sporting an SFBBO hat, in a lovely latte-colored heavy cotton, embroidered with our logo including the Black-necked Stilt. Each hat is \$12.00. One size fits all.

New this year, we are selling a charcoal gray fleece vest, embroidered with our logo including the graceful Black-necked Stilt. The vest has black trim and two zippered pockets. It comes in sizes S, M, L, XL and 2X. Each vest is \$55.00.



VOLUNTEER OF THE QUARTER JONATHAN HAYS

We have a new volunteer who is performing wonders for the Bird Observatory. Because the Bird Observatory has been conducting research and producing reports for twenty years, one of our primary concerns is preserving the large data sets that make our innovative research possible. Jonathan Hays has taken this on and a host of other issues in his new role as our volunteer technical guru. Jonathan's goals are to ensure that our work would survive if any disaster befell the Bird Observatory. So far he has improved our network, designed new backup procedures, surveyed the capabilities of our current computer system and begun writing a long term technology plan. How does Jonathan have time for all of this, you may ask. He is taking a sabbatical from work as a network engineer until January. We are very lucky to have him. Not only has Jonathan contributed considerable time and effort, he has also donated and installed needed computer parts, and worked with all of us with an attitude of grace and good humor. Thanks Jonathan!

Here Jonathan models our handsome Observatory Vest and Hat. Call the office to see how you can get yours!

Our thanks to these supporters of the Observatory...

MEMBERSHIPS

STUDENT/SENIOR

Elan Hahn, Kathleen and Derek Currall, Carol Dienger, Carole Foster, Laura Gould Severo Ornstein, Nancy and Herbert Greenfield, Pat Hauswald, David Hembry, Nathan Hendricks, Anthony Jackson, Mary L. Kelly, Jack Levin MD, Harold and Eleanor Lipton, Barbara Margolis, Michio Ninokata and Caroline Nabeta, Mildred B. Rose, Ann Witter, Allan and Julia Wofchuck, Bruce Aird, Al Bergeron, Paul and Marijane Chestnut, David Rice, Bob and Joyce Schieferstein, Marilyn and Phil Scowcroft,

BASIC

Jean Barrett, William Bilobran, Colleen Block, Robert and Susan L Christiansen, Don and Margaret Emery, Mike Feighner, Joan K. Frisoli, Harold E. Fukuma, Phil and Pat Gordon, Jodi Isaacs, R. Kent Johnson, Patricia and Gerald Johnson, Richard Kust, John and Betty MacDonald, Barbara Magnuson, Michael and Mary Anne Melby, Thomas and Lorraine Myers, Thomas C. Olson, Donald and Diethild Price, Jim Richardson, Steve Rutledge Julie Beer, Jeanne Schmitt and Amit Patel, Sheila B Sousa, Suzanne Van Stee, Jim Stopford, Carolyn Yale, Karlene and Terry Stoker

ASSOCIATE

R.J. Adams and Monika Davis, Stephen C Alter, Adu Bagley, Richard and Pat Carlson, Monica

Donovan and James Kern, George Griffeth, Kirsten R Holmquist, Jane Jordan, Robert B and Adelle B Knox, Dean Lloyd, David C. McIntyre, Winton McKibben, Gus and Gail Norton, Don Starks and Carol Woodward, Paul and Robin Stevens, Debbie Wong and Tadd Ottman, Bob and Carol Yutzy,

CONTRIBUTING

John Arnold, Irene A. Beardsley, Ann Chiller, Linda I. Johnson, Patric Kearns, Yvette Leung and Liwan Mah, James and Andrea Sandstrom, Vijay S. Ramachandran

SUSTAINING

Pamela Peterson, Ingrid Tung, William Taylor



DONATIONS

We thank the following individuals for their donations to SFBBO:

\$5-35

Anne-Marie Fleming, Lorraine Grassano, Colleen Block, Cary and Barbara Cochrell, Frances Alvernaz, Louis Beaudet, Jennifer Chadwick, Harriet Gerson, Jan Z. Hintermeister, Mary Ann Mancuso, Ron McKirdy, Vijay S. Ramachandran, Robin W. Smith, Hugh and Rosita Harvey, Anthony Jackson, Michael Rogers

\$50-99

George Bing, Karen DeMello, T. Charles and Meredith Moore, Jean Myers, Karen Pinsonneault, Cindy Roessler, Erin Ulrich, Bill Walker and Mary Wisnewski, Anna Wilcox, Virginia and Riley Willcox, Lou and Jean Young, Gerry Ellis, Jeanne Schmitt and Amit Patel, Doug, Jason, and James Stinson

\$100-250

Dudley B. Carlson, Gordon and Carolyn Davidson, Martin and Barbara Sidor, Robin W. Smith, Lowell Saumweber, Ted and Christy Koundakjian, Joyce Bartlett, Rita Colwell

\$250 - \$500

Vicki Jennings, Jan Z. Hintermeister, Arleen Feng, Gerry Ellis

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jan Hintermeister, President
Santa Clara
George Oetzel, Vice President
Menlo Park
Vicki Silvas-Young, Secretary
San Jose
Richard Carlson, Treasurer
Palo Alto
David Ainley, Ph.D.
Marin
Gerry Ellis
San Jose
Lowell Saumweber
San Jose
Scott Terrill, Ph.D.
Los Gatos
Lou Young
San Jose

STAFF

Janet Tashjian Hanson
Executive Director
Anna Clarke
Director of Development
Sherry Hudson
Biologist
Gina Barton
Biologist
Alvaro Jaramillo
Biologist
Sue Macias
Biologist
Michelle Melby
Field Biologists
Alyson Roskelley
Field Biologists

ADVISORY BOARD

Shannon E. Bros, Ph.D.
San Jose State University
Howard L. Cogswell, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus
California State University, Hayward
Charles Collins, Ph.D.
California State University, Long Beach
Adrian del Nevo, Ph.D.
Palos Verdes
Leora Feeney
Biological Field Services, Alameda
Elaine Harding
University of California, Santa Cruz
Paul Jones
Environmental Protection Agency
John Kelly, Ph.D.
Audubon Canyon Ranch, Cypress Grove Preserve, Marin
Peter Metropulos
Subregional Editor, American Birds
C.J. Ralph, Ph.D.
Redwood Science Laboratory, Arcata
Bob Richmond
Hayward Regional Shoreline
Steven Rottenborn, Ph.D.
W. David Shuford
Point Reyes Bird Observatory
Nils Warnock, Ph.D.
Point Reyes Bird Observatory

RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

Janis Buchanan
Robin Dakin
Chris Otahal
Tom Ryan
Emilie Strauss
Peg Woodin

The Bird Observatory is located at 1290 Hope Street in Alviso in the historic Bayside Canning Co. building. If you would like to tour the Cannery or visit our Coyote Creek Field Station, please call in advance.

Board meetings are held monthly and are open to the Membership. Call the Observatory for dates and times.

.....

The San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. All memberships, contributions and gifts are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

SFBBO

Telephone: 408/946-6548
Fax: 408/946-9279
Email: sfbbo@sfbbo.org
Web site: www.sfbbo.org

The Stilt is a quarterly publication of the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory. Graphic design by Proteus Graphics, Palo Alto. Printed on recycled paper by The Robots Printing Company, Mountain View. For permission to reprint any portion of it, call the Observatory at 408/946-6548.

Copyright, 2001 San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory.

Education Program to Begin at Coyote Creek Field Station

September 19th saw almost 40 students visiting Coyote Creek Field Station. The home-schooled students from all over the Bay Area learned how and why we band birds at the Field Station. It was a busy day at the station and during their visit the students had the opportunity to see Yellow Warblers, Pacific Slope Flycatchers, and Common Yellowthroats in the hand.



Song Sparrow helping out with a banding demonstration.

Just before the presentations began, we received a call from the Santa Clara Valley Water District that they had approved our grant request for \$25,000 for an education program at the Field Station. In the past few months, we have hosted a few field trips at the Station as an experiment to see how an education program might work and how it might be received. The response was overwhelmingly positive. People come away from the station with a greater understanding of the diversity of wild birds from North and South America that depend on riparian habitat. Students learn first-hand the relevance of careful scientific research as they watch volunteers measure, weigh, and band birds. Participants are surprised and thrilled to learn that our urban creeks support wildlife and they look upon their neighborhood creek differently afterwards.

In fact, we included the comments of several participants in the grant proposal. The grant from the water district will cover the cost of a brochure, interpretive signs at the trailer and the waterbird pond, and some staff time to develop the signs and brochure, develop a curriculum, and coordinate and lead visits.

Here are some of the member comments that helped us win the grant. Sometimes it helps to toot our own horn!

Thank you for an absolutely outstanding visit! We all got so much from it—not just the practical info on netting & banding, but a real appreciation for the persistence and passion (not an out-of-bounds word to use!) it takes to amass such a valuable database. And the birds were rather special, too—believe it or not, it was the first time several of the students had ever been that close to a wild bird! The only way we're going to counter the loss of species is to

make those species real and vital, and seeing those tiny lives held in your hands really brought that home for these students.

– Vicki Jennings, Biology Instructor, De Anza College

In some ways, this is an expansion of our volunteer program. Every year, SFBBO's programs enlist the aid of 60-100 trained volunteers, several student interns and pre-professionals. Hands-on experience in environmental monitoring and research gives community members a greater understanding of local habitat conflicts and increases the desire of the public to preserve habitat. Most of our volunteer opportunities require extensive training and commitment, but by giving presentations and workshops we can give students and adults the chance to be a scientist for a day, studying and conserving our local wildlife.

My nieces and nephew, who all live in the suburban area of Silicon Valley, experienced nature up close and personal for the very first time. They have already asked me when we could go birding again.

– Yvette Leung, Community Member & Volunteer

Thank you to all of you who helped provided input as we developed this program. If you are interested in a tour of the field station, please contact Anna Clarke at (408) 946-6548.

THANK YOU!

SFBBO acknowledges the generous support of the Santa Clara Valley Water District.



San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory

P.O. Box 247 1290 Hope Street Alviso, CA 95002
phone 408 946-6548 fax 408 946-9279 SFBBO@aol.com

Non Profit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
ALVISO, CA
PERMIT #9